

# Advocating on Behalf of Gifted Students

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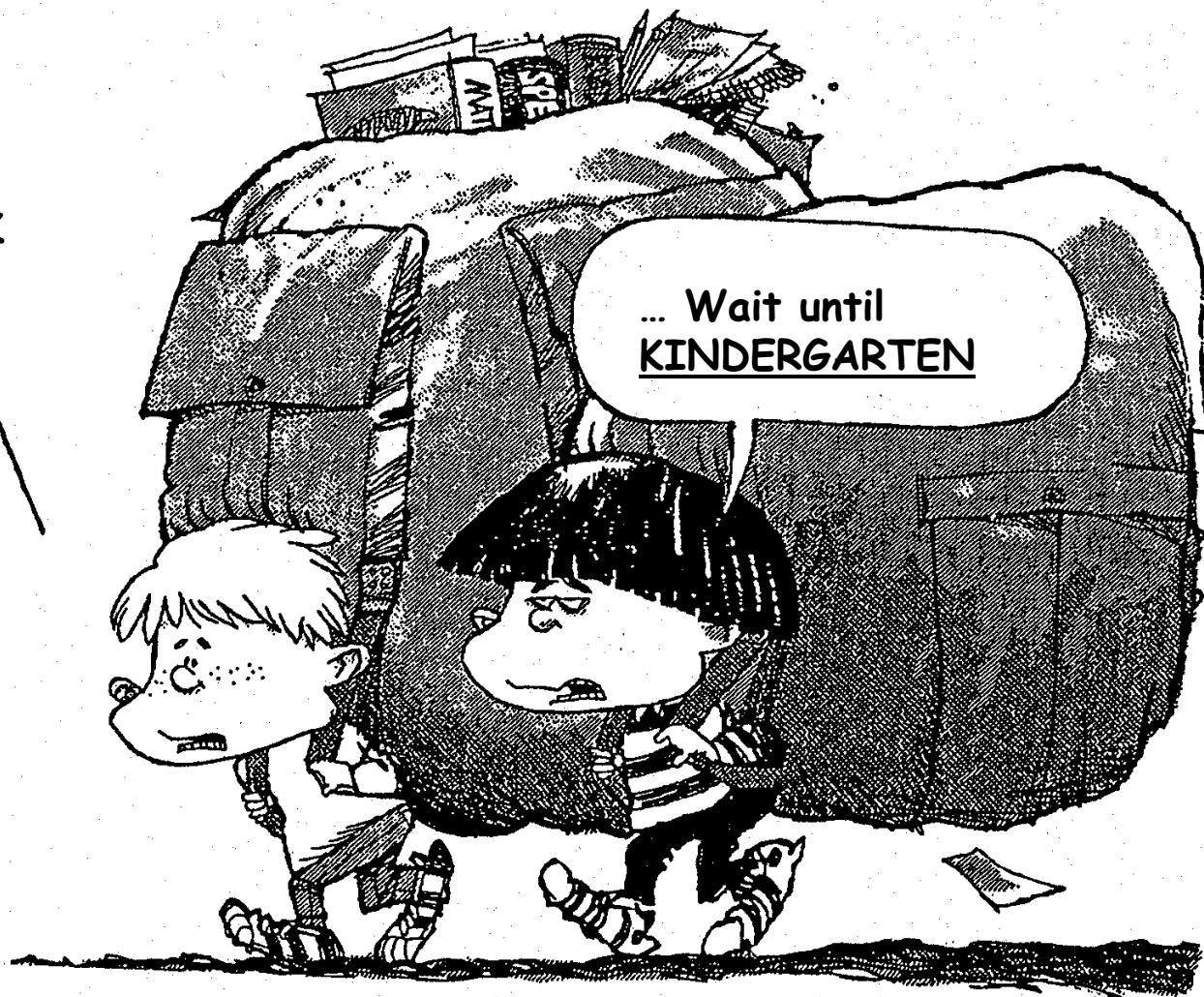
# State of the Nation in Gifted Education

- National Picture
  - Federal Funding Challenges
  - New Research
- A State Patchwork Quilt



In which direction are we moving in American Education?

... THIS WEEK  
WE TOOK A  
TEST TO SEE  
IF WE'RE  
READY FOR  
THE TEST  
THAT TESTS  
OUR TEST  
SKILLS...



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# Federal Education Budget – 2007

## Program Allocation For Every \$100 Spent



**Gifted  
Children  
\$0.03**



**Drug  
Abuse  
Prevention  
\$2**



**Reading  
First \$3**



**Children with  
Disabilities \$31**



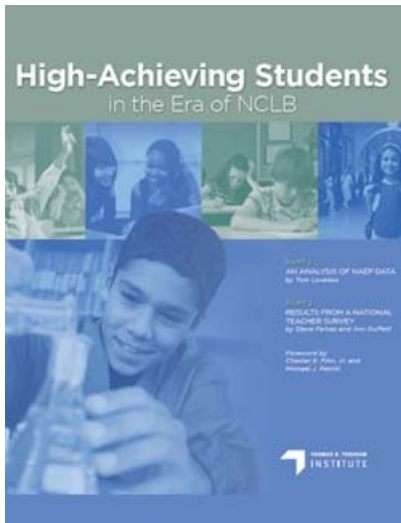
**No Child Left Behind \$57**

# New Research Studies

- Achievement gap in reading & math skills is growing twice as fast between grades K – 5 for students who begin school with scores one standard deviation **above** the mean as for those who begin one standard deviation below the mean.

Source: Reardon, F. (2008, March). *Differential Growth in the Black-White Achievement Gap During Elementary School among Initially High- and Low-Scoring Students (Working Paper # 2008-07)*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University

# Fordham Institute Report



- Between 2000 & 2007 top student performance on the NAEP math and reading scores “languished”
- Teachers report that advanced students are a low priority in their schools.
- 65% of teachers report little or no training in meeting the needs of GT students

# Variability between States

- 12 states spent more than \$10 million of state funds on GT students in 2006-07
- 12 states spent less than \$500,000
- 14 states do not require LEAs to follow the state definition of giftedness
- Only 9 states specifically require LEAs to recognize gifted eligibilities *from the same state*

- 9 states specifically permit early entrance to kindergarten; 12 prohibit such practices
- 15 states have statewide public high schools for math/science
- The most frequent service option for elementary school is 'regular classroom'
- 13 states include GT indicators on district report cards. The most frequent indicator is identified gifted students



# Definition

**Advocacy:** the act of pleading for, supporting, or recommending

*synonym:* champion, proponent, backer

# Why is Advocacy Important?

- Full discussion of education issues requires input of teachers, parents, students
- We need strong GT policies for all GT students, no matter where they live
- Represent those without a voice



# 3 Ways to be an Advocate

- Act individually
- Encourage others to act
- Join others



*Every time you help a family with their GT child, volunteer to help a fellow teacher to modify a lesson plan for an advanced student, discuss alternate interventions for a student in your classroom, or encourage new teachers to attend conferences such as the NM Association for the Gifted conference, you are engaged in advocacy.*

# What about Legislative Advocacy?

- Just one specialized form of advocacy
- Distinguished from other advocacy by the audience



# Legislative/Legislator *Audience*

- What did legislators DO before they were elected?
- Knowing elected officials' backgrounds can open doors to positive relationships and advocacy success.



# What Makes Elected Officials Tick?

- Hold public office to help others
- Like to be asked for help
- Don't know everything, but are good learners
- Want to get to know their constituents' concerns
- Have demanding schedules
- Appreciate positive press coverage

# Legislative/Legislator *Message*

- Flows from policy goals
- Utilizes current environment
  - Debunk myths
  - Link to current ‘hot topics’
- Supported by data



# Spreading the Message .....to Legislators

- Don't assume all legislators are created equal
  - House and Senate leadership
  - Target key committees

<http://legis.state.nm.us/lcs/>



# Spreading the Message ...to the public

- Letters to the editor / op-ed pieces
  - Influence the public
  - Legislators read them, too!
- Ask questions at public forums



# Spreading the Message ...engage the media

- Identify education reporters
  - Send GT- related story ideas
  - Offer yourself, your school program as a resource



# Spreading the Message ...making new friends

- There is strength in numbers
- Who makes a difference in NM?
  - education associations
  - business and professional organizations
- Help them understand why their members should be concerned; offer your expertise



# Spreading the Message

## ...invite them in!

- Invite key legislators to see for themselves

Visits to your schools and programs, with the opportunity to spend time with the students and their teachers is the best way to illustrate that something special, and very different, is taking place.



# Putting It All Together: the Do's and Don't's

## **DO NOT:**

- Assume others are representing the needs of GT students
- Ignore the power of joining with others outside gifted ed
- Fail to contact your elected officials; they want to hear from voters

# Putting It All Together: the Do's and Don't's

## **DO:**

- Volunteer to help
- Educate yourselves on the target audience and the policy goals
- Gather (share) data to support your case
- Use your own experiences to illustrate the key points
- Keep the children at the center of the conversation

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has."*

*-Margaret Mead*

# For More Information

- Download resources at [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)
- *Advocacy toolkit*
  - *Position papers; Standards*
  - *In the News(paper)*
- NAGC Publications
  - Sample state policies; underserved students
- Nat'l Research Center on GT
  - <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/NRCGT.html>

# Thank you!

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Hope to see you in  
Tampa!

55<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention  
October 29 – November 2

